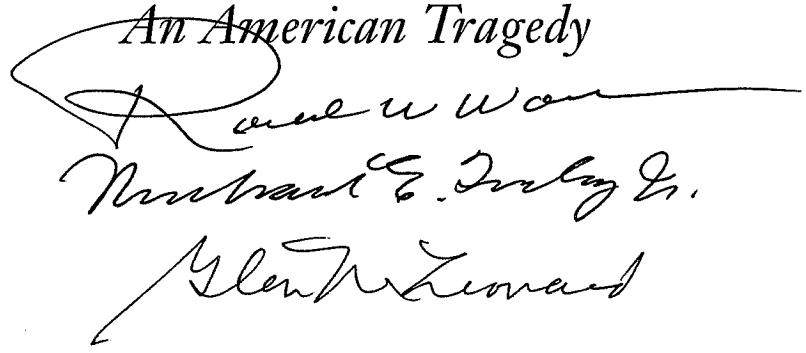
RONALD W. WALKER

RICHARD E. TURLEY JR.

GLEN M. LEONARD

MASSACRE AT MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

An American Tragedy



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[factor] is conformity. Few people have the courage to go against the

CHAPTER TEN

Make It an Indian Massacre

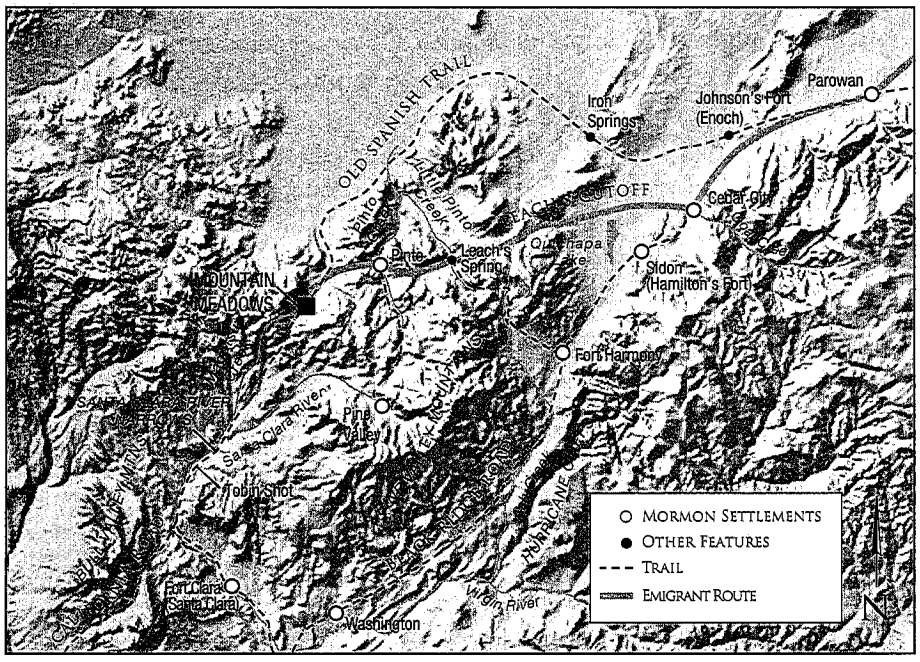
Cedar City, July 24–September 5, 1857

Along the California road some 250 miles south of Salt Lake City and 20 miles south of Parowan lay Cedar City, the heart of the Mormons' Iron Mission. To Brigham Young and his people, iron making was almost a religious sacrament, as worthy a Saint's consideration as preaching the gospel.[1] Iron making even became a Mormon metaphor. "We found a Scotch party, a Welch party, an English party, and an American party," reported Mormon apostle Erastus Snow after touring the area in 1852, "and we...put all these parties through the furnace, and run out a party of Saints for building up the Kingdom of God."[2]

By the middle 1850s, however, Cedar City's iron idealism gave way to slag. Without adequate financing, good technology, or experienced managers, the iron business floundered and most of the local people "lived in isolation and dire poverty, often going without shoes and warm clothing."[3] "Kisses without the bread and cheese," quipped one of the settlers, mocking the hard times with an expression of the day.[4]

Hans Hoth had nothing good to say about Cedar City when he passed through in 1856. He described poorly built homes lying haphazard on the land and people whose condition was no better. "Never before had I seen such dirty and ragged people among the Mormons as here," he wrote. Nor did Hoth like the residents. Told by their leaders

SOUTHERN UTAH



Map by Sheryl Dickert Smith and Tom Child

for years not to trade with outsiders, many residents refused to trade openly with Hoth's party, though Hoth learned that the cover of night brought possibilities. Prices for this secret trading ran high, as did his suspicions. "I have become acquainted with many bad people among the Mormons," he said, "and here at this place I did not meet with one good and sincere person."[5] A Mormon apostate fleeing Utah, Hoth was bitter toward its people, but he was right about Cedar City's dire condition.

When iron production seemed most hopeful, the village had a boomtown population of almost a thousand men, women, and children, making it one of Utah's largest communities at the time. By 1857 most of the people still lived in "Old Town," an expansion of the makeshift pioneer fort built four years before, during the Walker War. An adobe wall enclosed much of the place, and at the center was a large area used as a public square. Some of the citizens, however, had begun moving to more permanent and less flood-prone quarters on the bench land to the southeast, putting up cabins or digging dugouts. At least two fine buildings anchored this "New Town": Isaac Haight's new home, still under construction, and the "tithing office." The latter, a place to bring the offerings and donations of the people, served also as the main public building in the city, "a meeting house, school, theater, and everything."[6]

On July 24, 1857, Cedar City had its own Pioneer Day celebration, just as Brigham Young was holding his in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Haight—Cedar City's leading citizen—delivered an oration on the scenes "the Church has passed through," and in a parade, residents carried banners celebrating virtue, unity, and industry. Two of the banners had more of an edge. Twelve uniformed young men carried the inscription, "A terror to evil doers"—a biblical term sometimes given those who enforced law and loyalty in England and America. It was the phrase recently applied to Haight by John D. Lee. In addition, two dozen young boys carried the title "Zion's Avengers."[7]

In early August, when news reached Cedar of the approaching U.S. Army, it flew from house to house, and the "people gathered at the public square." "I am prepared to feed the enemy the bread he fed to me and mine," Haight reportedly said.[8] When George A. Smith arrived several days later on his southern Utah tour, his speeches further roused the people's enthusiasm. Dispatches from Daniel H. Wells, the territorial militia commander, warned of a possible attack on the southern settlements and stressed the need to shore up alliances with local Indians.[9] "You will never know how black the clouds were over our people," one Cedar City citizen later told his son.[10]

Like other Utah communities, Cedar City had recently revitalized its militia in response to legislation passed early in the year. But the rumors of war had accelerated preparations for military action. Haight seemed ready, if not anxious, to defend the city.[11]

"The 'Nauvoo Legion' was fully organized and drilled,...spying out the passes in the mountains, discussing the best means for defending ourselves and families against the approaching army, looking out places of security for our families in case we had to burn our towns and flee to the mountains," recalled John M. Higbee, a Cedar City militia major, town marshal, and one of Haight's two church counselors.[12]

By the end of August other news was making its way to Cedar City, not of an approaching army but of a coming emigrant train. Exactly what the local people heard about the train before its arrival is difficult to determine. What can be established with some certainty is that the people of Cedar City knew a non-Mormon company was approaching and that its members had many cattle. Cedar City bishop Philip Klingensmith said he heard the company had been ordered out from

Salt Lake City, and John Hawley may have told what he heard about the problems over grazing lands at Provo and Nephi.[13] Rumors of the supposed poisoning at Corn Creek reached Beaver by the first week of September and then Cedar City, though it is not clear exactly when.[14] A few reminiscent accounts place its arrival ahead of the emigrant company, perhaps reflecting stories told in the massacre's wake.[15]

After the massacre, its perpetrators and their neighbors—trying to explain or even justify why it happened—recounted what they heard about the company before it reached Cedar City and what happened on its arrival. Local resident Mary Campbell claimed that before the emigrants reached Cedar, Haight gave an impassioned speech that rehearsed rumored wrongs of the emigrants. "The rumors raised the ire... of people," she said. Campbell recalled Haight saying that "the people in southern Utah needed some stock just then, as if he was giving the citizens a hint to get the stock away from the company."[16]

If Campbell's reminiscence was accurate, Haight may have been thinking of his people's welfare. If the Saints came under siege by approaching troops, they would need cattle, in addition to grain, to survive in the mountains. Haight's comment also fit one later explanation of the massacre. As Philetus Warn later put it, the train "was known to be in possession of considerable valuable property, and this fact excited the cupidity of the Mormons."[17] Even Brigham Young eventually came to a similar conclusion. Some men had taken advantage of "the disturbed state of the country to accomplish their desires for plunder," he said in 1877.[18]

The members of the Arkansas company reached Cedar City around noon on Thursday, September 3, staying only "a little over one hour."[19] The company's loose stock—one local citizen estimated five hundred head—stayed outside the walls, but between twelve and twenty wagons with oxen and horse teams drove through Old Town en route to Klingensmith's mill just east of the fort.[20] Samuel Jackson Sr., who farmed southwest of Cedar, had ignored orders not to part with grain to outsiders and sold the Arkansas people about fifty bushels of wheat, along with some corn.[21] Waiting for the grain to be ground at the mill, some emigrant men sampled the Mormon "Sage Brush Whiskey" sold at the nearby distillery. "Getting a little more of this than they should," one settler said, "they talked very freely."[22]

Trouble broke out when the miller, following "the counsel of I C Haight," demanded a cow in trade for grinding the grain—an exorbitant price, though isolated trading posts along western trails often charged whatever they could get for goods.[23]

The high price charged at the last mill before California "caused some to curse and swear and say hard things about the Mormons," one Cedar City resident recorded. Another settler, Charles Willden, claimed that fifteen to twenty emigrant men began "talking in a loud excited and boisterous manner profaning and threatening to do bodily harm and Kill some of the citizens"—including Bishop Klingensmith. Willden said these men affirmed "that they had helped to Kill Joseph Smith... and other Mormons at Nauvoo & Missouri, and that By___ G___ they would Kill some more yet. That the United States troops were on the plains enroute to Utah, that they the said Company would go on to the Mountain Meadows, and wait there until the arrival of the said troops into the Territory and would then return to Cedar... and carry out their threats."[24]

Willden's testimony, recorded in 1882, summarizes the animosity and fear engendered by the emigrant train, and the link the Saints made between the emigrants and the army. His memory was likely influenced by justifications some Mormons gave for the massacre after the fact, but he was not the only settler who remembered it that way. Nephi Johnson, who was visiting Cedar City that day, said "the company was of a mixed class, some being perfect gentlemen, while others were very boastful, and insulting, as they said that they were coming back, and assist the [U.S.] army to exterminate the Mormons." Alexander Fancher tried to calm the men. Johnson reported, "I did hear Capt. F[a]ncher, who was the leader of the emigrants, rebuke the boastful ones of the company, for making these threats."[25]

Another run-in took place at the Deseret Iron Company store near the center of the fort. Store clerk Christopher J. Arthur, Haight's son-in-law, remembered that some of the emigrants "came in to buy several articles that was not in the store which caused them to act mean." With profanity, they vented their anger when they were again unable to buy badly needed supplies, a problem they had faced repeatedly up the trail.[26]

Some of the emigrants went looking for Haight at his nearby house in Old Town, perhaps wanting to complain about what happened at the mill and store. Haight was, after all, town mayor and manager of the Deseret Iron Company. One account said that "cursing" and "drunk" men went to Haight's house and demanded that he come out "if he was a man." The men also yelled threats about sending an army from California to seize Young, Haight, Dame, and "every other damn Mormon in the country."[27]

Haight slipped out the back door and ordered Higbee, as town marshal, to arrest the men.[28] The emigrants had not physically harmed anyone, but Haight had sufficient legal cause to arrest and fine them. Territorial ordinances declared that anyone "publicly intoxicated, so as to endanger the peace and quiet of the community, shall be liable to arrest" and fined. "Profaning the name of God" was also subject to a fine.[29]

By now a pattern was emerging. At various points through the territory, the emigrants had a hard time getting the food and other supplies needed for their survival and comfort. Some vented their frustration in ways that made the Mormons—already apprehensive about the approaching army—feel even more threatened. At Cedar City the cycle reached a crescendo. As the emigrants were leaving town, one reportedly said that if "old Brigham, and his priests would not sell their provisions, by G–d they would take what they wanted any way they could get it." With that, he "killed two chickens, and threw them into his wagon."[30] They may have been Barbara Morris's. When the sixty-three-year-old woman crossed the street from her home to the central corral, a loudmouthed "tall fellow" on horseback "addressed her in a very insulting manner," her son later claimed. The man "brandished his pistol in her face" and "made use of the most insinuating and abusive language."[31] The "man on a grey horse was the most loud mouthed of the lot," said Mary Campbell, perhaps speaking of the same emigrant.[32]

Some men in Cedar City, like men elsewhere in America, followed a code of honor that required anyone who insulted a "wife, mother, or sister" to apologize or "be punished."[33] Barbara Morris was the mother of Elias Morris—a militia captain and Haight's second counselor—and the wife of John Morris, one of Bishop Klingensmith's counselors. When Marshal Higbee tried to arrest the horseman for profanity and disorderly conduct, he "refused to be taken, and his companions stood by him." Higbee was forced to back down.[34]

Some of the emigrants went farther south to Hamilton's Fort, where they were able to trade. No troubles were reported in this tiny settlement. Most of the train then camped a few miles southwest of town near Quichapa Lake.[35]

News of the Cedar City disturbance traveled up the road. Nephi diarist Samuel Pitchforth recorded that on September 8 he heard "the emegrants who went through a short time since was acting very mean—Threatening the Bishops life."[36]

Minutes of Cedar City's Female Benevolent Society also provide contemporary evidence that residents believed the emigrants were a threat. Later in the week, two women whose husbands followed the emigrants to Mountain Meadows counseled the other women in their group "to attend strictly to secret prayer in behalf of the brethren that are out acting in our defence." Another woman, "Sister Haight," told the women not to be fearful and "to teach their sons & daughters the principles of righteousness, and to implant a desire in their hearts to avenge the blood of the Prophets"—referring to the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.[37]

A persistent element in the stories told against the emigrants was that one boasted of having a gun that killed Joseph Smith. The Benevolent Society minutes suggest that vengeance for Smith's death was a current topic during the week of the massacre. If an emigrant in fact made such a boast, it was probably just part of the venting that went on in Cedar City. None of the identified victims of the massacre is known to have had anything to do with the Smith brothers' deaths.

Even if local Saints believed they had identified a killer of Joseph Smith, however, that would not have justified a massacre. Mormon doctrine strongly held that men should be punished for their own sins and not for the sins of others, and Latter-day Saint scripture declared the shedding of innocent blood to be unforgivable.[38] A year and a half before the massacre, Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff were discussing a scripture on the topic, and Young observed that it "was a vary nice point to distinguish between innocent Blood & that which is not innocent." He observed that if the Saints were commanded of God "to go & avenge the Blood of the prophets," they would not know "what to do in such a case" because they wouldn't be able to tell who was innocent and who was not. "There is one thing that is a consolation to me," Young concluded, "and that is I am satisfied that the Lord will not require it of this people until they become sanctifyed & are led by the spirit of God so as not to shed inocent Blood."[39]

After the Arkansas company left town, Cedar City leaders discussed what to do. As often happens in times of conflict, they focused not on the peaceful emigrants, who made up the vast majority of the company, but on a minority whose actions colored their view of the whole. From the Cedar City leaders' point of view, outsiders had defied the law, faced them down in front of their own people, and resisted arrest. They had threatened townspeople, mocked the values of the community, and announced themselves ready to support the army that seemed at southern Utah's doors.

The men of the train would not live to tell their side of the story. But the fact that not one Utah citizen was physically harmed by the

Arkansas company speaks for itself. Any menacing words from the emigrants were probably just idle threats and boasts made out of frustration and in the heat of the moment. But in the charged environment of 1857, Cedar City's leaders took the men at their word.[40]

Not willing simply to let the matter go, the leaders sent a message that day to military district commander William Dame in Parowan, "stating they could hardly keep people from collisions with them [the emigrants] on account of their violent language and threats, and asking what to do." Haight needed Dame's permission before he could use the Cedar City militia to aid Higbee's embarrassed sixteen-member police force.[41]

Twenty-two-year-old John Chatterley carried the message to Parowan. Chatterley waited until early the next morning for a reply to carry back to Haight. Inside Dame's home, he could hear the voices of some of Parowan's leading citizens, including Edward Dalton, John Steele, Samuel H. Rogers, and Jesse Smith, as well as Dame.[42] The council saw the Cedar City turmoil for what it was—disturbing, but hardly a threat that called for harsh measures. The council decided that "all possible means should be used to keep the peace until the emigrants should leave and proceed upon their journey." Dame's adjutant, James Martineau, said, "Dame sent a letter in answer counselling peace, and for them not to regard their threats, as 'words are but wind.'" In a later account, Martineau said the words of the letter read, "Do not notice their threats, words are but wind—they injure no one; but if they (the emigrants) commit acts of violence against citizens inform me by express, and such measures will be adopted as will insure tranquility."[43]

Haight could not have been pleased by Dame's response. After all, his community—not Dame's—had experienced the conflict. Haight may have believed that Dame, never known for meeting matters head on, did not understand the situation. George A. Smith later said Dame had an aversion to bloodshed and Haight felt "contempt for him on this account."[44] Whatever the reasons, Haight did not accept Dame's direction. Instead he and others moved ahead with a plan to take action against the emigrants.

No record of the decision-making survived, but everything about 1857 must have been part of the calculation: the reformation, the war, the rumors, and the nerves. Yet it is still difficult to fathom how the Cedar City conflicts, so minor in retrospect, turned into an atrocity. The literature of modern behavioral science, whose scholars describe the conditions leading to mass riots and killings in many cultures, provides enlightenment.

By the first week in September, the typical components for group violence existed in Cedar City, including the demonizing of opponents, a concentration of authority, and a lack of clear orders from headquarters. The final spark that ignites violence may be small but seem large in the eyes of perpetrators. "Fear of the victims . . . may have a realistic component," wrote violence expert Ervin Staub, "but the victims' power or evil intentions are usually exaggerated."[45] "Great evil can come from small, unremarkable, seemingly innocent beginnings," agreed Roy Baumeister in his study of violence. "One does not have to be at all evil to cross the line. [But] once one has done so, there are powerful forces that sweep one along into greater acts of cruelty, violence, or oppression."[46]

Brigham Young's new Indian policy, announced August 16, may have confused some local leaders. Young had said that "if the United States send their army here and war commences" then emigrant "trains must not cross this continent." If a war began, Young said, "I will say no more to the Indians, let them alone, but do as you please."[47] Word of the policy traveled by mouth, with each hearer interpreting it individually. On August 30 Bishop Blackburn in Provo reported that Indians near the Malad River on the northern route had stampeded some six hundred head of emigrant cattle and horses. "Our Prophet says he had held the Indians back for 10 years past but shall do it no longer," Blackburn said.[48] News of Young's speech had probably reached Cedar City by late August.[49]

Haight's interpretation of the policy may have influenced his next decision. Without mustering out the militia, Haight could try using local Indians, the Paiutes, to do what he thought needed to be done. After receiving Dame's message, Haight and other leaders in Cedar City decided "to arm the Indians, give them provisions and ammunition, and send them after the emigrants" to "give them a *brush*" and take their cattle.[50] Haight asked Cedar City resident William Willis, a Mexican War veteran, "the best way to make an attack on the train." Willis offered advice that now seems ordinary: The attack should come when the emigrants were traveling. If the attack came while the emigrants were in camp, he told Haight, "the emigrants would whip his Indians."[51]

Haight and other leaders thought they knew just the place for an ambush. The California road went west from Cedar City along Leach's Cutoff to Pinto and then southwest through the Mountain Meadows. A dozen miles farther south, the road descended "a very steep incline" into a canyon created by the merging Magotsu Creek and Santa Clara

River.[52] The road wound through groves of trees and below cliffs that provided ideal hiding places for attackers.

Hans Hoth, traveling the Santa Clara River route in 1856, described the "many Indians" living there. Hoth also wrote of its reputation among non-Indians. "Several travelers have already been attacked, murdered, plundered or crippled by the tribe that lives closest to the trail," he recorded nervously before descending into the canyon. Two days later, as his company passed along the river, Paiutes armed with guns, bows, and arrows swarmed his company, stripping the men of their outer clothing and demanding gunpowder and blankets but not killing anyone.[53]

Troubles on the road had started long before Mormon settlement of the region. Traders and emigrants going to and from California drove stock through the area, depleting fragile native food sources and trampling or grazing Indian gardens and fields. Slavers captured Paiute women and children for sale in New Mexico and California, and travelers sometimes shot Paiute men. Santa Clara canyon provided Paiutes who survived with terrain in which they could defend themselves from depredations and at times, as Hoth learned, try to even the balance with outsiders.[54]

Whites also recognized the canyon's advantages as an ambush site. In February 1857, California-bound John Tobin and three other horsemen camping in the canyon came under fire as they slept. Tobin and two others were wounded. The next morning, the men saw "boot prints and the tracks of eight shod horses." Shortly before the attack, the four men had parted company with "seven or eight" fellow-travelers, among whom were two ex-convicts. Blame for the attack, however, was soon laid on Mormons reacting to a circular letter from Brigham Young. The letter instructed southern leaders to be on alert for the two recently released convicts, who might attempt a horse or cattle raid. Horse thieves and cattle rustlers often received summary justice on the frontier, and Young's circular expected that if a crime were committed, there would not "be any prosecutions for false imprisonment or tale bearers left for witnesses."[55]

SANTA CLARA NARROWS OVERVIEW VISTA. *John W. Telford, Courtesy LDS Church History Library.*

Though the ex-convicts committed no crimes as they went south, one historian later suggested that when Dame got Young's letter, he may have overreacted. The writer concluded that either Dame or Haight might have assigned others to attack the travelers, and they simply shot the wrong men.[56] Others who have studied the incident suggest the victims may have been attacked by the seven or eight horsemen from whom they had just splintered, including the ex-convicts.[57]

Whether he had a role in the Tobin shooting or not, Haight—with his fellow leaders in Cedar City—clearly identified Santa Clara canyon as the place to ambush the Arkansas company. To them, it offered "opportun[itie]s for such an attack" that were "more evident" than elsewhere.[58] They planned to have Paiutes "follow the emigrant train" along the Santa Clara River. Then, "at some opportune point on that stream, while the company was strung out along the road, traveling, the Indians should attack it, kill as many of the men as they could, and get away with as much cattle and spoil as possible, but not to harm the women and children."[59]

For the plan to work, Haight had to convince Paiutes to participate. He turned for help to the energetic John D. Lee, a fellow major in the Iron Military District who was still serving as government-appointed farmer to the Paiutes. Lee recalled a rider coming to Harmony with a message that "Haight wanted me to be at Cedar City that evening without fail."[60] Years later, Lee's wife Rachel described her husband and Haight as "bitter" enemies at the time.[61] Contemporaneous evidence, however, shows they were on good terms when Haight summoned Lee to Cedar City that day.[62]

Haight's experience told him he could depend on Lee. The year before, the two were camped at Cove Creek in the mountains north of Beaver when Haight's horses disappeared. Haight, with his pleurisy-scarred lungs, remained in camp alone while Lee braved deep snow

SANTA CLARA NARROWS. *John W. Telford, Courtesy LDS Church History Library.*

to hunt for them. All day and into the next, Haight waited. Then Lee reappeared with the horses in tow. Somehow he had managed the two- to six-foot drifts and difficult terrain to find the animals and rescue Haight.[63]

As Lee traveled from Harmony to Cedar City, Haight sent several riders west along the trail taken by the Arkansas company. They would get ahead of the emigrants and set the attack plan in motion. Working through Higbee, Haight first asked Ellott Willden, Josiah Reeves, and possibly Benjamin Arthur to go to Mountain Meadows, where the emigrants were expected to camp eventually.[64] The three young men were told that the "plan was to... have the Indians ne[a]r to attack on [the] Santa Clara, instead of the civil authorities arresting the offenders in Cedar."[65] Part of the men's assignment was "to find occasion or something that would justify the Indians being let loose upon the emigrants."[66] They were also to get the company "to move on"—an effort to hurry the emigrants into the trap.[67]

Someone carried an order to twenty-four-year-old Samuel Knight, who lived at the north end of Mountain Meadows and helped work the ranch. With Indian mission president Jacob Hamblin away, Knight, as his counselor, was next in line. Knight was ordered to go south near Washington and Santa Clara "and instruct the Indians to arm themselves and prepare to attack the emigrant train." The attack was to occur "at the junction of the Santa Clara and Magotsu."[68]

The Paiutes, who generally lived in small groups spread across the landscape, had never attacked nor killed on anywhere near the scale that the Cedar City plan required. For the scheme to succeed they would have to be convinced to participate and then gathered en masse to the attack site.[69]

Besides Willden, Arthur, and Reeves, two more riders headed west from Cedar City. One was Joel White, who served as captain of one of Cedar's militia companies. The other was Klingensmith, one of the most ardent supporters of the plan to attack the train. White and Klingensmith were on their way before twilight Friday evening.[70]

The two afterwards claimed their mission to Pinto was "to passify the Indians there if possible and to let the emigrants pass."[71] According to their story, they rode a couple of miles out of town, where they met Lee, who was driving a wagon into Cedar City. "He asked us what the calculation of the people was in regard to those emigrant people—in regard to letting tham pass," White recalled. They told Lee "the conclusion was... to have the Indians passified as much as possible to let them pass." The news seemed to annoy Lee. "I have something to say in that matter and I will see to it," he reportedly said.[72] He then shook the reins and resumed his journey toward Cedar City.

Lee denied the incident ever took place.[73] He said White and Klingensmith went "by way of Pinto, to raise the Indians in that direction."[74] Lee was probably right. Klingensmith and White could hardly have been going to pacify Indians who did not know of Cedar City's plans.

White and Klingensmith drove hard, traveling at night. They took Leach's Cutoff, working their way through the low mountains west of Cedar City and onto the sloping, grassy area near Leach's Spring. In the darkness they passed the emigrants camped at the spring "just off from the road"—the Arkansas company's last overnight stop before Mountain Meadows. A half dozen more miles brought White and Klingensmith to Pinto.[75] White claimed they awoke one of the Indian missionaries, perhaps Richard Robinson, to give him the sealed order.[76] Robinson said he could not "remember such a circumstance."[77]

Soon White and Klingensmith were back on the road toward Cedar City.[78] Riding east on Saturday morning, September 5, they saw the

emigrants pulling up a hill a few miles east of Pinto. As they passed the train, Klingensmith discreetly pointed out to White the "principal ones" in the company, particularly the man who "had made these threats, that he had helped kill Joe Smith."[79] White had not seen the emigrants before, being absent when the company passed through Cedar City.[80]

Klingensmith said he and White met Cedar City high councilman Ira Allen as they neared town. Allen purportedly told them a "decree had passed" countermanding their efforts at peace. "He said that the doom of the emigrants... was sealed, that the die was cast," Klingensmith claimed.[81] But White testified he could not "recollect of meeting any body on the road." If such an incident had taken place, White maintained, he would have remembered it.[82] Klingensmith's stories of meeting Lee when they left Cedar City and Allen when they returned may have been a later effort to clear his name: his alibi was that he had gone toward the Meadows to stop an attack, and the countermanding decision to destroy the emigrants was made while he was gone.

While Klingensmith and White were riding west on Friday night, Lee arrived from Harmony and met Haight at the public square in Cedar City shortly after nightfall. Haight said he wanted to have "a long talk on... private and particular business." The two men retired to Haight's new, partially built, brick home near the iron works in New Town.[83] "We spent the night in an open house on some blankets," Lee said, "where we talked most all night." Lee claimed Haight told him terrible things about the emigrants, that they "were a rough and abusive set of men" who "had insulted, outraged, and ravished many of the Mormon women." They had heaped abuses on the people "from Provo to Cedar City" and had poisoned water along the road. "These vile Gentiles" had "publicly proclaimed that they had the very pistol" that killed Joseph Smith, and wanted "to kill Brigham Young and all of the Apostles." They had threatened "to return from California with soldiers... and kill every d—d Mormon man, woman and child." Finally, they had broken Cedar City ordinances and resisted arrest "by armed force." Because Haight never left an account, there is no way of knowing how much of the barrage was his—and how much later came from Lee. But whatever complaints Haight made that night, Lee said he "believed all that he said."[84]

PHILIP KLINGENSMITH.
Courtesy Anna Jean Backus.

According to Lee, Haight thought that "unless something was done to prevent it, the emigrants would carry out their threats." The Cedar City leaders had decided to provision Indians and send them to kill the men of the company and take their cattle. But Lee told Haight that in such a large-scale attack, others would die, too. "You know what the Indians are," Lee said he told Haight, reflecting a nineteenth-century stereotype of Indians. "They will kill all the party, women and children, as well as the men."[85]

The Cedar City plan—which began as a harsh response to a minor conflict—was morphing into a massacre of men, women, and children.

"Perpetrators make many small and great decisions as they progress along the continuum of destruction," Ervin Staub observed, and "extreme destructiveness... is usually the last of many steps along [the] continuum." According to Staub, "There is usually a progression of actions. Earlier, less harmful acts cause changes in individual perpetrators, bystanders, and the whole group that make more harmful acts possible. The victims are further devalued. The self-concept of the perpetrators changes and allows them to inflict greater harm—for 'justifiable' reasons. Ultimately, there is a commitment to... mass killing."[86]

In the end, who got killed didn't seem to matter to the planners, so long as they could blame the casualties on Paiutes. "It was then intended that the Indians should kill the emigrants," Lee explained,

"and make it *an Indian massacre*, and not have any whites interfere with them." According to the plan, "no whites were to be known in the matter, it was to be all done by the Indians, so that it could be laid to them, if any questions were ever asked about it."[87] After the massacre, the story of an attack solely by Indians would be told as a coverup again and again, long after it had any kind of credibility.[88]

For Lee and Haight, their all-night meeting was full of fervor—terrible and, in their minds at the time, necessary. Later, when emotions cooled and the crime was apparent, a controversy began over which of the men was most responsible for their decisions. Haight's friends blamed Lee. Lee had "seemed very determined that the company should be made to suffer severely for their impudence and lawlessness," said Elias Morris, who claimed he saw Lee "counseling with Isaac C. Haight." Speaking of the emigrants, Lee had assured Haight "he had Indians enough around him to wipe the whole of them out of existence." Haight, "more moderate in his feelings," had at last agreed.[89]

Lee had his own excuses. He claimed Haight forced him to obey by placing him under orders, and that these had come from Dame, the chief military officer in southern Utah. "I knew I had to obey or die," Lee said.[90] But Dame had not ordered a militia attack, and Lee probably knew it. Haight and Lee both held the rank of militia major, though Haight, as major of the second battalion, was by law technically superior to Lee, major of the fourth.[91] Haight, as stake president, was also Lee's church leader. But Lee was bold enough to challenge Haight's authority if he disagreed. Headstrong, black-and-white in personality, and speaking his mind to a fault, Lee would have been the first to object if he had felt Haight's plans were wrong—and then dare Haight to do something about it.[92]

The most likely scenario was that when the two men breakfasted at Haight's house on Saturday after their meeting, they were partners—but with some differences.[93] Lee, the religious zealot, wanted to play a meaningful role in what he supposed to be God's purpose. The emigrants "were enemies to us, &...this was the beginning of great and important events," he said shortly after the massacre.[94] Haight was caught up by the threat he perceived in the emigrants and wanted "to put them out of the way before they done any more harm."[95] Both men also felt the need to settle old scores with the "gentiles," and the idea of taking some cattle and other spoils could not have been too far from the surface.[96]

In retrospect their motives made little sense, but the continuum that leads to mass murder is not a rational process. Both men were being swept by "powerful forces" into "greater acts of cruelty, violence,...[and] oppression."[97] Both Haight and Lee were quick to make judgments and to execute on those decisions—hallmarks of extralegal justice and unchecked power. During the Walker War, Lee had strapped on his sword, "called the people together," and declared that "by the help of god & the Faithful of my Brethren" he would, if necessary, shed the blood of the "cursed wicked apostate fault finding wretches" in their midst.[98] More recently, Haight had told George A. Smith that if troops threatened his community, he would not wait for instruction, but "take his battalion and use them up before they could get down through the kanyons."[99]

Before the meeting ended, Lee said he asked Haight if it wouldn't "be well to hold a council of the brethren before making a move." Haight replied, "We can't now delay for a council of the brethren." He would bring the matter before a council on Sunday; in the meantime, Lee was to send Paiute interpreter Carl Shirts to gather Indians in the south, and Haight would ask interpreter Nephi Johnson to do the same in the north.[100]

Haight and Lee soon began to execute on the plan. On Saturday, Mary Campbell, whose cabin was at the northwest corner of Old Town, saw four men going to the cottonwoods west of Cedar City, where members of the Coal Creek band of Paiutes often camped. The four men were Haight, Lee, Higbee, and Klingensmith, who had just returned from his overnight trip west. The men persuaded Paiutes there "to follow up the emigrants and kill them all, and take their property as the spoil of their enemies." That evening, Paiute women visited Old Town and told Campbell that Indian men had left the camp and were on their way "to kill the 'Mericates'" (Americans)—the Paiute term for non-Mormons.[101]

The white leaders' inciting of the generally peaceful Paiutes to participate in the attack is one of the most disturbing aspects of the entire story. The Southern Indian Mission had established close ties between the settlers and the Paiutes, which in cases created a sense of trust, and even dependence, that made them willing to comply. Wells's letter warning of possible U.S. troops in the area, which was received in southern Utah about a fortnight earlier, had urged Mormon leaders to tell the Indians of their peril—"that our enemies are also their enemies."[102]

One theory used to explain Paiute participation had to do with a meeting that Brigham Young, Jacob Hamblin, and Dimick Huntington held in Young's Salt Lake City office during the evening of

September 1. Pahvant leader Kanosh from Corn Creek was present, along with eleven other Indian leaders, including Ute leader Ammon from Beaver and two leading Paiutes: Tutsegavits, a headman from the Santa Clara and Virgin River region, and Youngwuds from the Ash Creek area near Harmony.[103] These men, along with Ammon's wife and Jacob Hamblin, had traveled to Salt Lake City when George A. Smith returned from his southern Utah tour because they wanted to "find out about the soldiers."[104]

As part of his developing war policy, Young wanted Indian leaders to ally themselves with the Saints against the approaching troops and prepare for a long siege. The day before the meeting, Huntington had met with Indians camped near Ogden north of Salt Lake. In the meeting, he "gave them all the Beef cattle & horses that was on the Road to Cal Afornia the North Rout," telling them that "they must put them into the mountains & not kill any thing as Long as they can help it but when they do kill take the old ones & not kill the cows or young ones."[105]

Running off cattle and saving them in the mountains would help assure food for the Indians—and perhaps the white settlers—in the event of an anticipated siege. Having horses to ride during the coming war would also prove an advantage.

Similarly, in the September 1 meeting, the native leaders from central and southern Utah were told, apparently by Young himself, that they might take "all the cattle that had gone to Cal the southe rout."[106] Some historians have linked this meeting to the subsequent massacre at Mountain Meadows. "The conflicts the Arkansas train encountered on the trail mattered not at all in the final balance," wrote Will Bagley, because as the company "struggled southward, its fate was being sealed in a meeting in Great Salt Lake City between the leaders of the southern Paiute bands and the man they called 'Big Um'—Brigham Young.... After their meeting with the Mormon prophet on September 1, the Paiute chiefs slept in Great Salt Lake City and left precipitously the next morning."[107] Bagley concluded that when Young "'gave' the Paiute chiefs the emigrants' cattle on the southern road to California," he "encouraged his Indian allies to attack the Fancher party."[108]

But neither chronology nor unfolding events confirm such a charge. Young's invitation for Indians to take cattle was a generalized war policy, not an order to massacre the Arkansas company. As the conflict continued, Young directed members of the territorial militia to take cattle and destroy supplies owned not only by the federal government but also by its private contractors. Despite the wartime atmosphere, this was done successfully with very few casualties.[109]

Haight and his associates were recruiting Paiutes before word of the September 1 meeting reached southern Utah. In addition, the Indians attending the September 1 meeting in Salt Lake were reluctant to take part in the crisis. According to Huntington's account, when the meeting ended, the Indians declared themselves "afraid to fight the Americans & so would raise grain & we [the Mormons] might fight."[110]

The Indians did not rush south. United States government vouchers recorded payment for entertaining "Kanosh & 14 of the band, Ammon & wife, four days," in Salt Lake City from September 1 through September 4. The total number of Indians was identical to the number in the Hamblin entourage and probably included the Paiutes Youngwuds and Tutsegavits.[111] Kanosh and three men of his band received hats and shoes in Salt Lake City on September 2.[112] Tutsegavits, in turn, was ordained a Mormon elder in the city on September 13.[113] According to the Jacob Hamblin journal, "the Chiefs was treted with mutch respect [They] was taken to the work Shops gardens orchards and other plases to Sho them the advantages of industry and incourag... them to labor for a living."[114] Before Tutsegavits left town, he and Hamblin stopped for another visit with Brigham Young. Wilford Woodruff demonstrated the advantages of horticulture by showing the Indian leader through his garden. He gave him peaches to eat and peach pits to plant.[115]

Indian recruitment for the massacre was local, not influenced by the September 1 meeting, and it built on trust that southern Utah leaders had already developed with Paiutes. One Indian account told of a mild protest. "I have not guns or powder enough," said Moquetas, one of the Paiute leaders, when asked to help with the attack. John D. Lee promised him both. Moquetas next asked about plunder, and Lee offered "clothing, all the guns and horses [of the emigrants], and some of the cattle to eat."[116]

Less than two weeks after the massacre, an Indian from northern Utah reported meeting a large band of Paiutes who acknowledged their role in the killings and said the Mormons had "persuaded them into it." According to their account, "John D. Lee came to their village and told them that Americans were very bad people, and always made a rule to kill Indians whenever they had a chance. He said, also, that they had often killed the Mormons, who were friends to the Indians. He then prevailed on them to attack the emigrants... and promised them that if they were not strong enough to whip them, the Mormons would help them."[117]

Despite their promise to help, white leaders wanted to gather enough Indians together so that white participation would be minimal. "My

orders were to go home to Harmony," Lee remembered, "and see Carl Shirts, my son-in-law, an Indian interpreter, and send him to the Indians in the South, to notify them that the Mormons and Indians were at war with the '*Mericats*'...and bring all the Southern Indians up and have them join with those from the North, so that their force would be sufficient to make a successful attack on the emigrants."[118] While his son-in-law roused Indians in the south, Lee was to gather Paiutes living around Harmony.

Lee said that on his way back to Harmony from Cedar City, he met "a large band of Indians under Moquetas and Big Bill, two Cedar City Chiefs," probably the Paiutes that he, Haight, Higbee, and Klingensmith had recruited at the cottonwoods. "They were in their war paint, and fully equipped for battle." The Paiutes asked Lee "to go with them and command their forces."[119] Despite Lee's earlier promises to them, they remained hesitant.

"I told them," Lee recalled, "that I could not go with them that evening, that I had orders from Haight, the *big Captain*, to send other Indians on the war-path to help them kill the emigrants, and that I must attend to that first." Lee told them "to go on near where the emigrants were and camp until the other Indians joined them." He would then "meet them the next day and lead them." The Paiutes wanted to take with them Lee's adopted Indian son, Lemuel or "Clem," perhaps as security that Lee would show up. "After some time I consented," Lee said.[120]

There would be no backing out now.